

Interview with Ambassador Murat Williams

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR MURAT WILLIAMS

Interviewed by: Melvin L. Spector

Initial interview date: December 5, 1990

Copyright 2009 ADST

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Williams.]

Q: This is an oral history of Ambassador Murat Williams for the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program under the aegis of the Association for Diplomatic Studies located at the Lauinger Library at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. My name is Melvin L. Spector and I am interviewing Ambassador Williams in his home in Georgetown, Washington, DC on December 5, 1990. Ambassador Williams I would like to know about your background. Let's begin with your family and then your education.

WILLIAMS: My family has lived in Virginia since 1690. I was born in Richmond in 1914. I expected to spend my entire life in Richmond or Virginia. I didn't go out of Virginia until 1935 when I got a job on a cargo ship which took me to France. I spent six weeks in France and England and Ireland round trip that cost me about \$150. I came back to Richmond and worked for Douglas Freedman on the News Leader in Richmond. I got a Rhodes scholarship and went to Oxford for three years.

Q: And before that time you had been going to the University of Virginia?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: I did go to the University of Virginia. I graduated there in 1935 and went to work on the News Leader in Richmond, edited by Douglas Freedman.

Q: He was the great historian.

WILLIAMS: Yes. I expected to spend my life there. But I got a Rhodes scholarship and went to Oxford for three years. At the end of that time I had been invited by an old friend of the family's who was going to Spain as Ambassador to accompany him there as his private secretary. This was Alexander W. Weddell, who was our first ambassador to Spain after the Spanish Civil War.

I spent about seven months with him and realized that I had to go back to Dr. Freedman who was holding a job for me as assistant to the editor of the News Leader in Richmond. But the war came and the pull of the service was such that I had to leave the newspaper in September 1940 to go into the Navy. I spent the next five years in the Navy, but two of those years I had duty as assistant naval attach# in Madrid. When the war finally ended I had had three years of duty at sea, the Atlantic and Pacific, and after that I was told that I was in a good position to go into the Foreign Service under the Manpower Act. For some reason I was persuaded to do that and did not return to Dr. Freedman.

Q: May I go back a moment before we leave this part of your history, when you were in England what was your general field of study at Oxford?

WILLIAMS: At Oxford my principal field of study was politics and economics. I had a great opportunity there to study with some very good tutors, but Mr. Weddell was setting up an embassy in Spain in the spring of 1939, when I was finishing at Oxford, and he urged me to come as soon as I could. I spent a very interesting time as his private secretary.

Q: You got a bird's eye view of being an ambassador from him at an early...

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Yes. I traveled with Ambassador Weddell and his wife to various places in Spain and I lived in their embassy. I was rather spoiled I should say. All the privileges of diplomacy with none of the duties that a Foreign Service officer might have at that time.

Q: That period in Spain must have been very interesting. What were our objectives then in Spain?

WILLIAMS: Our objectives were to establish relations with Franco without compromising the position of the American people and our government, which had been rather opposed to Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Mr. Weddell was a very correct and formal ambassador who could be counted on not to disturb Franco but at the same time to maintain our position. He was chosen, I think, because of those qualities that he had.

Q: Was he a career Foreign Service officer?

WILLIAMS: He had been ambassador previously to Argentina and had had many duties in the Foreign Service starting as vice consul in Zanzibar, I think it was, and Catania in Italy. He, himself, had been private secretary to an ambassador many years ago. He was a great teacher of the formalities and protocol and elegance of diplomatic life. At the same time he was quite serious. He made me study different aspects of Spanish politics and history. He believed very much in the importance of history for diplomacy.

Q: Excellent.

WILLIAMS: It was a great thing to be able to do, but I really had promised Dr. Freedman that I would come back.

Q: So you were with two men who believed in history as a discipline.

WILLIAMS: Yes, indeed. And I think it is a most important thing whenever you go to a post to learn the history of the place first.

Library of Congress

Q: You were with Dr. Freedman for how long?

WILLIAMS: I was with Dr. Freedman for about a year until the war had developed to the point that it was almost inevitable that we would be in the war and the Navy was beginning to recruit officers. I signed up for the V-7 program.

Q: When you were with Dr. Freedman, what were your responsibilities with the newspaper?.

WILLIAMS: I was writing editorials on subjects that he was particularly interested in and some I, myself, brought up. I did a little research, but not a great deal in that period.

Q: Was he at that time writing his history of President Washington?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he was working on the history of Washington. It was a splendid opportunity. It emphasized for me the importance of history in diplomacy.

Q: Then at that point you got into the Navy.

WILLIAMS: I went through all the training that was required to become an ensign under the V-7 program. I had sea duty in the Atlantic until about April 1942. I think my outfit took the first American troops to England. I came back from that and found orders waiting for me telling me to go to Spain as Naval Attach#. So I had two years there in Spain. But I requested sea duty, I wanted to get back to the sea. Then I went out to the Pacific and took part in the Philippines campaign, the landing at Leyte Gulf. I was in an organization that was making plans for the landings in Japan. But while we were making those plans and training we got word of the atom bomb and the war was over. So I came back and was encouraged to join the Foreign Service under the Manpower Act.

Q: When you were in the Navy making plans for the invasion of Japan did you feel that the dropping of the atomic bomb was a good thing?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Well, everybody felt relief that we had won the war. We didn't know the horrors of the bomb. In fact my first reaction was to think that we had at last harnessed the atom and could flood the Sahara desert and other deserts. This was going to be a great new world. It was not until later when I realized what had happened to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that I understood the horror that the atom bomb would bring to the world.

Q: Then you went into the Manpower program?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I got a job in the State Department in 1946 pending the opportunities to get into the Foreign Service under the Manpower Act. The job I got, I think I got it because I had experience in Spanish speaking diplomacy, was to be the first desk officer for El Salvador and Guatemala. We had never had desk officers for those countries before. As I remember, two or three people could handle most of Central America.

I became a desk officer under Bob Newbegin who was an excellent Foreign Service officer and William B. Cochran. I learned most of what I learned about the conduct of foreign affairs at that period from those fine officers and Willard Barber, who was also supervising...

Q: What positions do you recall that these gentlemen held at that point?

WILLIAMS: Bill Cochran was a director of the Office of Central America and Caribbean Affairs. Bob Newbegin was director of the Central America part, as I remember, and Willard Barber, I think, had a similar supervisory job over some of those countries.

Q: At that point was there an Assistant Secretary for Inter American Affairs?

WILLIAMS: I believe Ellis Briggs was.

As far as El Salvador and Guatemala were concerned there didn't seem to be many particular policy objectives beyond the protection of American lives and property. There

Library of Congress

wasn't much concern over the development of those countries as there later was. While I was doing that work, an opening developed in El Salvador, and Murray Wise, one of our colleagues, suggested that I be sent there.

Well, I didn't know much of the history of El Salvador. But I knew about our present efforts to protect American lives and property and such things and welcomed the opportunity to go there as the number two man in the embassy.

Q: That was pretty good for a first assignment.

WILLIAMS: That was pretty good to be the number two which meant that I would take charge of the embassy when the ambassador was away.

Q: At this point had you become a Foreign Service officer?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I had become a Foreign Service officer FSO 4.

Q: Did you have to take an examination?

WILLIAMS: Only an oral examination because of the Manpower Act. I did that while I was working on the two desks.

Q: So when you came in you were probably either civil service or a foreign service reserve.

WILLIAMS: Civil service—I can't remember the grade.

Q: So you went to El Salvador as the deputy chief of mission.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

Q: With that title?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: We didn't use that title then. It was just understood that you would take over...

Q: That you would be the charg# when the ambassador was out of the country.

WILLIAMS: Yes. El Salvador in those days was a quiet, beautiful country. The wealthy land owners, 14 families, were extremely hospitable and sort of spoiled foreign diplomatic visits, but...

Q: What year was this?

WILLIAMS: 1947 when we went there. My wife and I were married in 1946. She had had experience in OSS and knew a great deal about life and diplomacy. We didn't have any hard jobs. One had to be aware of any shaky government. There had been revolts, coups d'etat in Central America since the beginning. There was, in fact, one revolt in December 1948 when a group of military officers overthrew President Castaneda-Castro. It so happened that Albert Nufer, a fine experienced Foreign Service officer, was out of the country. I was the Charg# d'Affaires.

Q: You got your baptism by fire.

WILLIAMS: Yes. My baptism by fire when there was the coup which overthrew Castaneda-Castro. Ambassador Nufer was out of the country so I was in charge. Fortunately he came back in four or five days, but during those days my main duty was to observe what was going on. There was nothing that we could do or needed to do. There was no reason for us to interfere, although I must say that during the coup I went to the President's house to see what was happening to him and found myself with the Nuncio and various other chiefs of mission in El Salvador watching the President when he was being asked to surrender. He finally agreed to resign and the junta of three army officers and two civilians took control of the government.

Q: What was the purpose of the rebellion? Why did they rebel?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: They were just eager to take power themselves. Castaneda-Castro had not been too efficient he had not run the country particularly well. There was no principal complaint, no issue. But there were several very intelligent and clever people in the junta. We got on very well with them. One of them was a lawyer named, Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, who today, 1990, 43 years later, is the Chairman of the UN's Commission on Human Rights and has just made a report on the lack of human rights in Iran. I read about it in the New York Times.

One of the things about El Salvador that I should mention is that they had many people who distinguished themselves on the world scene. In fact, at that time there was one Salvadoran who was a member of the World Court.

Nufer came back and we developed good relations. We recognized the new junta and things went on very smoothly as far as El Salvador was concerned. Meanwhile, I had put in my request for Russian studies. I wanted to study Russian and be assigned to the Soviet Union. A few months later, in June of 1949, I got word from the Department that I wasn't going to be sent to Russia but I would have the next best thing which would be to be sent to Romania.

Q: What was the relationship between the junta, more specifically the military, and the 14 wealthy families of El Salvador?

WILLIAMS: That is an excellent question because one of the members of the 14 families met my wife just as the shooting began and said to her "Don't worry this is our man, these are our people who are taking over." Well, they didn't have to exert much control. Castaneda-Castro had been on pretty good terms with the 14 families. He just wasn't as efficient as he might have been. There was a lot of waste. I think his family was involved in certain charges of graft and corruption which the 14 families didn't like. But there was no real, serious issue. Castro was sent to jail, I might say, on charges of corruption. I saw him many years later, about 15 years later, by chance and he said to me "It is good to see you

Library of Congress

again. People thought I was dumb didn't they. I wasn't so dumb. I made a little money, I went to jail, but I came out with my fortune." He said, "I came out with my dinerito." He was a very happy man. His two sons-in-law had also gone to jail, but came out. It was a sort of O. Henry type revolution.

Q: I take it he wasn't in jail very long.

WILLIAMS: No, none of them were in jail very long. In those days El Salvador, like some of the other Central American countries, were not serious in that sense. Politics was just about as humorous as O. Henry describes it in his Cabbages and Kings. I always tell people who go to Central America that they should start by reading O. Henry. His short stories about politicians and soldiers, and admirals even, lives in Honduras and El Salvador.

Q: I didn't know that O. Henry had written about those.

WILLIAMS: Well, one of the best stories I ever read about El Salvador was called The Fourth in Salvador by O. Henry, and describes a group of expatriate Americans who accidentally get involved in a revolution.

Q: I must read that.

WILLIAMS: The Fourth in Salvador is in Roads of Destiny. Most of the O. Henry's short stories about Central America are in his other book Cabbages and Kings. But I found that there are very few of my associates who have seen those books. I love them.

Q: How did you look at the role of the embassy vis-a-vis other elements in the country, other than the government? Vis-a-vis the local or international press.

WILLIAMS: At that time the embassy had excellent relations with the 14 families, but we didn't have as close relations to the intellectuals of the country as we later developed—I

Library of Congress

returned to El Salvador 15 years later. We got on very happily with all branches of society. University students were rather calm in those days, nothing like they were later on.

Q: These university students, many of them were children of the 14 families, were they not?

WILLIAMS: Only the children of the 14 families went to college in the United States Stanford or Southern Cal. Some went to Harvard and then to Oxford. They came back and some of them did good for their country.

As I was saying I wanted to go to the Soviet Union but instead I was sent to Bucharest.

Q: Were you given any training, language training, before you left?

WILLIAMS: No, it didn't seem to be necessary to have special training. My assignment was to be in the political section of the legation, but it so happened that the person who was to go as the Deputy Chief of Mission, Ed Gullion, couldn't get a visa.

Q: Why was that?

WILLIAMS: our friends always thought that it was suspicious that I was able to get a visa. I must have better connections with the communists. I don't think they had ever heard of me, they had heard of Ed, and since I was unknown they gave me a visa. By the time I got there, October 1949, the legation was getting smaller rather than larger.

Once more I had the good fortune of having an excellent chief, Rudolf Schoenfeld. He was a Foreign Service officer of great experience. He was very correct with his dealings with the communists. We weren't able to accomplish much in Bucharest while I was there. In fact, the Romanian government began to seriously restrict our movements. They would not let us go out of town without special permission. We couldn't even go to Lake Snagov without special permission. We were followed wherever we went. No one could get a visa

Library of Congress

to go to Bucharest except our couriers. We went about eight months waiting for another officer to arrive.

Q: How large was the legation at that point in terms of Americans?

WILLIAMS: It was a large legation, when I arrived there were over fifty. But two or three months after I got there the Romanian Foreign Office summoned Ambassador Schoenfeld and told him that our legation must be reduced to a maximum of ten persons including all levels. We no longer had guards over the 24-hour period. We had at one time only seven persons because we couldn't get visas for clerks or officers.

Q: They were denying visas based on what they conceived to be the political biases of the people being selected?

WILLIAMS: By this time it was not just a question of the quality of the person who might be coming, but there was an absolute limit to the number of Americans they wanted to have in the country.

We had some very fine local employees who were invaluable. But life became very difficult for them. Two or three, by the time I had arrived, had been picked up and imprisoned. Two of them actually showed up in a show trial. There were three or four others, who, during my early months there, were seized on their way to work and never heard from again. We could protest this kind of thing, but our influence in Romania was zero at that time. We had several clerks in our consulate who fortunately were Jewish and were able to go to Israel.

The only traffic jam, by the way, that I ever saw in Bucharest in those days, was in front of the Israeli Legation. Romanian Jews were lining up to get exit visas so that they could go to Israel.

The shortage of personnel in the legation was such that I would have to take turns sleeping at the legation or staying at the legation all night. We had no marine guards. We

Library of Congress

realized that we were bugged. We had a regular schedule. There were two other Foreign Service officers during most of that time. We took turns with the guard whose name was Leopold Supinski, standing guard there.

On one occasion I remember my wife came to the legation to speak to me during the daytime hours and couldn't find me anywhere. She was told that I might be in the bathroom with the rest of the officers. There we were in the bathroom with the water running so that we couldn't be overheard. As a matter of fact, I don't know how interested anyone is in this particular fact, but we were bugged in our living quarters and our offices. We were unable to get any technician into the country to find the bugs for we couldn't get a visso we always assumed we were talking with bugs listening. After we left, when we finally got a technician in, there were twenty or more bugs found in our bedroom. On the golf course strange that there still was a golf course, but it had been reduced to six holes we had to be aware of the caddies. They reported on us.

Q: That put a strain on your family life as well as on your official life.

WILLIAMS: Our official life was very much limited in those days. I think the most useful thing that I did at that time was to prepare a weekly telegram to the Department summarizing the contents of the Cominform Journal which happened to be published in Bucharest.

Q: Cominform Journal?

WILLIAMS: The Cominform Journal was a paper which was printed under the supervision of the Communist Party in many languages and sent around the world. It would tell the loyal communists in the various countries what was going on and what they had to do. It was the means of instructing communists all over the world what the Party thought was the right course of action to take. We had a Romanian who went to their office every Friday and waited for the Cominform Journal to appear. He was instructed to bring the first copy he could get in French, English, Spanish, etc., any of the languages that we could speak,

Library of Congress

quickly back to our office where I usually had the duty of summarizing it and sending it to Washington. Some people told me later that that was about the only telegram from Bucharest that anyone in the Department paid any attention to. We just happened to be in the location where the orders for the communists around the world were issued.

Q: You were able to cable those back to Washington?

WILLIAMS: We were able to cable those back to Washington. I can't remember what our cable system was, but that obviously could be sent clear.

Q: Did you have relationships there with other embassies?

WILLIAMS: Yes. With the British, Turkish, Finnish, Italian. There weren't a great many Western legations, but we did keep in touch with those that were there. Sometimes I think our life was a little too restricted to them. But we did our best to get out among Romanians as much as we could. But it was almost suicidal for a Romanian to come to us—for any to come to have lunch or dinner with us.

Q: The man in power than was the one who was overturned last year?

WILLIAMS: No, this was long before Ceausescu. This was the days of Gheorghiu-Dej. The President of the Republic was an old doctor Constantin Parhon, who was an expert in geriatric medicine. He could make old people feel young, but he was rather old himself. I do remember seeing him in the legislature going to sleep. The most important character at that time in Romania was a woman, Anna Pauker, who was very close to Stalin and very high up in international communism. She was the Foreign Minister. She was an extraordinary woman, very capable, very popular. I have seen two sides of her. I have seen her in the national assembly looking furious, condemning Yankees and other Westerns in very harsh terms. But I have also seen her in her office where she was as smooth and charming as any woman would be expected to be. She smoked excellent

Library of Congress

cigarettes. I can still remember the smell of the Balkan cigarettes. And she dressed very well.

Q: In what language did you communicate?

WILLIAMS: Usually in French. Romanian was not a very difficult language. It was so much like Latin and Italian that we could read the newspapers without any trouble.

Anna Pauker was the daughter of a rabbi and I thought at one time that I was probably one of the few Foreign Service officers who had to deal with two Foreign Ministers who were both women and both daughters of rabbis. There is a great contrast between Anna Pauker in Romania and that great lady Golda Meir in Israel. I had to deal with both of them and, of course, had much closer relations with Golda Meir than with Anna Pauker. They each were very forceful and strong but diametrically different in political orientations. Anna Pauker was the most outstanding character that I had anything to do with in Bucharest.

Q: What was your relationship with Washington? How did you feel about the "backstopping" from the Department?

WILLIAMS: Well, there was not much that the Department could do. We began to be restricted to Bucharest and not allowed to travel in the country. The same restriction was put on Romanian diplomats in Washington. When our legation was reduced in Bucharest the Romanian legation in Washington was also reduced. Sometimes it seemed that we were merely keeping the flag flying, keeping the legation open, not achieving anything and reporting a great deal of secondhand material. But it was instructive.

Q: You were in Romania for how long?

WILLIAMS: About two years. I was ordered to come back to take a position in the office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Freedman Matthews. Another great opportunity I had to serve with an outstanding diplomat. Doc Matthews was one of our

Library of Congress

great diplomats in the post-war period. He was very influential. He avoided becoming a celebrity diplomat like some of his successors. He never gave interviews to the newspapers or to television. He had no desire to make himself a celebrated person. He just did his job.

Q: What position did he hold at that point?

WILLIAMS: Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the job which later Robert Murphy had.

Q: More or less the third position in the Department. Kind of the senior political position in the Department.

WILLIAMS: Yes. That was a time when I did all kinds of little jobs for Doc Matthews. I would read the telegrams early in the morning, pick out the ones that I knew he would be most interested in and get them in to him. If something was happening in the distant part of the world, and the telegrams didn't make it clear to him, occasionally Doc would say, "Go down to see so-and-so and see what really is going on here and come back and tell me." I would go and see the country director and then go back to tell Doc that so-and-so says this is the situation. Doc knew how to judge the worth of so-and-so's comments. I worked hard with Doc and got along quite well with him. I admired him extravagantly. It is hard for me to remember any particular things that we did in those days. But we did keep up with everything.

Q: This was the period of the beginning of the Korean War, I believe. Is that right?

WILLIAMS: It was after that. It was 1951, the Korean War had already begun.

Q: NATO was being formed.

WILLIAMS: Yes. I left that job two years later to go to the War College.

Library of Congress

Q: Before we leave your experience with Doc Matthews, how did he deal with his assistant secretaries? Did he have staff meetings?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he had a staff meeting almost every day with all the geographic assistant secretaries. I had an old friend, Fritz Nolting, who was senior assistant to Doc Matthews. Fritz and I used to do the same kind of work in a more senior position than I.

Q: You said that you dealt with the incoming telegrams, did you deal with the outgoing telegrams too?

WILLIAMS: Yes, because so many of them had to be approved by Doc.

Q: There was a Secretariat in those days was there not?

WILLIAMS: Yes. We had very close relations with the Secretariat. In Mr. Acheson's day...

Q: Was Acheson the Secretary of State?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

Q: And the Under Secretary for State was James Webb, I believe.

WILLIAMS: At one time, yes. I am afraid I can not offer anything particularly useful about that particular job. I do know that Doc was terribly disappointed when his old college friend Adlai Stevenson didn't make it to the presidency.

Q: Doc Matthews knew Adlai Stevenson?

WILLIAMS: Yes. They were close. Fritz and I would alternately attend the Secretary's staff meeting.

Q: What view did you have of Secretary Acheson?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: I respected him enormously. He was a marvel lawyer diplomat. And, of course, much more affable than his successor, Mr. Dulles. Mr. Dulles never seemed to smile.

Q: Let's talk a little about people's personalities. How important is it for saying, for example, that someone had a sense of humor?

WILLIAMS: A sense of humor was terribly important. You can't keep people working for you unless you show a little sense of humor sometime. If you are always stern, determined people don't enjoy working with you, no matter what the cause is. Mr. Dulles, of course, had his cause; they were mainly anti-communist. He worked terribly hard. There is no surprise that he should eventually have the trouble he had because he just seemed to take no time for rest or even to have a good lunch something like that.

Q: When you say the trouble he had, you mean his physical ailments?

WILLIAMS: Yes. He treated his body rather harshly. But those days in Washington don't seem to offer examples or incidents that one remembers. I don't remember those days in Washington nearly as well as I do time spent in the field.

Q: Speaking of those days in Washington, you, of course, living here in Washington, but you were seeing friends socially?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

Q: That was important too, was it not?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. It was. Not so much during that assignment as in other assignments. But I don't think I have much to contribute along that line.

Q: But generally speaking I would say that the hypothesis is that the friends you made directly or indirectly in Washington were helpful in later days, perhaps, when you were

Library of Congress

thinking of people for positions. You got to know them well and would think James would be fine in this particular job. Was that true?

WILLIAMS: Yes, that was true. I have never been in the position you have been in, for example, of choosing people to go to posts. I don't think I have ever done that.

Q: Were you living at that point in Georgetown?

WILLIAMS: I was living right across the street. I walked to the Department every day.

Q: Then after that you went to the National War College.

WILLIAMS: To the National War College at Fort McNair which was a luxurious experience. I had so much time to think about foreign policy and the problems of diplomacy and to get to know the military officers and officers from other departments of the government. It was a great thing to be there.

I still was hoping to get assigned to the Soviet Union, but when I finished, instead of the Soviet Union I was ordered to be Consul General in Salonika. That was an excellent opportunity and a good post. Of course, in Cold War days you were right up against the frontier. I have just been reading the story of George Polk, which you may or may not have seen.

Our function in Salonika was not only to report what was going on among Greeks, but to reassure the Greeks who had gone through the terrible Greek Civil War against the communists and had stood valiantly with us and with our NATO friends. We had to reassure the Greeks that we were with them. One of the most important things that went on was the frequent visits of American naval vessels. They came to Salonika to show the flag, to remind the Greeks that we were on their side.

Q: We did not have a base there?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: No, we did not have a naval base. We did have a Voice of America facility for transmitting. We had large ships and amphibious ships which would put on a display on the shore front there at Salonika which I think must have been good for the Greek morale. We also had a very active consulate issuing visas, and protecting American interests. Our country was well regarded by all Greeks because we had a great American institution in Salonika which was the American Farm School.

Q: I didn't know about that.

WILLIAMS: It was originally established by missionaries to try to make Greek villagers not only into good farmers but also into good citizens.

Q: I never knew about that organization.

WILLIAMS: Queen Fredericka, for example, came up to visit us with her husband and went to the Farm School. I will never forget how she said "This school is so great we would like to have one in everyone of our departments of Greece." There were twelve of them.

Q: Was there any relationship between that school and the Marshall Plan?

WILLIAMS: No this school went back to 1903.

Q: So it wasn't getting any funds from the Marshall Plan?

WILLIAMS: No. It was supported with contributions from the States and it tried to show Greeks how they could turn their barren soil that is so abundant in Macedonia and northern Greece into good productive farm land. The Greeks loved it.

Q: As far as you know, is it still in existence?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Yes, it is. It has become very popular. Students from many parts of the States are sent there to spend summers learning Greek life. It has been a great point in maintaining good understanding relations between us and the Greeks.

I don't remember any particular incident that happened during that period. I had a short time in Salonika. Oh, yes, one thing that was very much on the minds of the Greeks at that time was Cyprus. Greeks were demanding that Cyprus be made a part of Greece. It was still a British Crown Colony. There were occasionally demonstrations in Salonika calling on us to use our influence with the British and calling on the British to make sure that Cyprus would be made a part of Greece. On one occasion the demonstration got so out of hand that our USIA office was sacked. All the windows were broken. The Greeks apologized abundantly and came and saw that it was restored in two or three days. But besides the feelings about Cyprus and the visits of American naval vessels, there wasn't a great deal to be said about the short time I was in Salonika.

Q: You were there just a short time?

WILLIAMS: I was there only a year and a month, or so. I got telegraphic orders telling me to return to Washington to take a position in the Refugee Relief program.

Q: Before we leave Greece, may I ask you about your opinion about other parts of the foreign program thersuch as the USIA. Did you have any contact with them? How much did they contribute to what you were doing? And perhaps the Marshall Plan if there was any of that left at that point?

WILLIAMS: The USIA was doing a very important job among people in Macedoninorthern Greece that is. It had a very active office, I think if it hadn't been such an active office the student demonstrators wouldn't have sacked it as they did during that demonstration. But we also had a Voice of America facility which meant that there were a number of technicians and specially trained people to handle those transmitters. As far as the

Library of Congress

Marshall Plan was concerned, economic aid was very important. I attended two or three ceremonies in which economic aid projects were dedicated. Things like electric generators for some of the towns that didn't have generators.

Q: Did the USIA program was both a cultural and information program each English?

WILLIAMS: I don't believe it did. They may have, but I don't remember.

During the period I was there the Refugee Relief Act was passed by Congress. We were beginning to issue visas to refugees who had been misplaced by the Second World War and presumably some had been misplaced by the Greek Bandit War. That meant that we had several special immigration officers in Salonika as well as investigators to support the work of our Consulate. There was one particular problem that was notable which was that there came to apply for these visas a number of Greeks, young people in particular, who had been taken off during the Greek Bandit War as prisoners to Yugoslavia, but who eventually when the war ended made their way back to Salonika. They applied for visas under the Refugee Relief Act and were turned down on grounds that their address, let's say on Constantine Street, was the same now as it was when they were born. How could you be called a refugee if the place where you live is the same as the place you were born? The answer was, of course, that "We were taken off to Yugoslavia, had gone through this war, and finally made it back to our house. But we still think of ourselves as refugees." Literally they could be turned down, but I intervened in some of the cases and with the support of our vice consul, Norman Cansle the one who was particularly involved in this took our case beyond the investigators and said to Washington that since these people are victims of war even though they live in the same street where they once lived, the house has been burned down and we think they ought to get visas. The immigration service was overruled and we were able to issue those visas.

Later on Mr. Dulles was accused of not getting the Refugee Relief Program into action the way its promoters had wanted it. Mr. Dulles was accused of lying when he said the consuls

Library of Congress

were carrying out the Refugee Relief Program. He and Mr. Loy Henderson, the Under Secretary, were concerned about what to do. How could they make the Refugee Relief Program work in all the countries where it was supposed to?

Mr. Henderson then said, "If you wanted to you could send someone out and put him in charge of the Refugee Relief Program in Europe, but as soon as he leaves Washington he loses his authority. I think the best thing to do would be to send out an inspector because when an inspector arrives people stand up and take notice and make sure they do what they are supposed to do." So Mr. Dulles said, "All right we will send an inspector. But who will we send?" Mr. Henderson said, "Well, the Consul General in Salonika has been issuing visas as he was support to issue and they are getting along very well." So Mr. Dulles said, "Send the Consul General."

So I got called back. I remember when I got my orders I had to go around and see Cansler and the rest of the consular section to make sure that I really knew what this was all about. So I had quite a course in the Refugee Relief Program. But, I got back to Washington and it was one of those days that we had an air raid alert in the Department. I found that everyone was out of the Department that day except the Secretary's office and I was told that I must go right up and see the Secretary before I saw anybody else in Washington. So I went up and saw the Secretary and he said, "I want you to go out and see that these consulates issue...

Q: The Secretary was... ?

WILLIAMS: Mr. Dulles. ..."these visas. And it will pay you if you get this job done." I thought it was strange for the Secretary of State to use that expression.

Q: And someone like Mr. Dulles, too. Now do I understand that you became a member of the Inspection Corps?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Yes, I became a member of the Inspection Corps. Ray Miller was the chief of the corps at that time, I believe. He said I was going to be a special kind of inspector, I was not going to be a regular inspector, however I would have the authority of a Foreign Service inspector.

Q: Let's talk just a minute about the role and importance of the Inspection Corps to the Department. It is interesting to me that Mr. Henderson would have said the best way to get this done was to use the Inspection Corps. Would you talk just a minute or two about the importance of the Inspection Corps?

WILLIAMS: All of us who have been abroad in a post when an inspector arrives knows that we have to shape up and make sure that everything is being done the way it should be done. Gogol, the famous Russian playwright, wrote a play called The General which tells how little bureaucrats in a Russian town cleaned up everything and began to do their jobs properly when a rumor spread that an inspector was coming to town. Well, I had read Gogol's play, and I knew that when the inspector arrived people would shape up because inspector reports were important not only for current operations, but also for future promotions, etc. An inspector's word was the word. I have known occasions when problems have arisen in an embassy or post abroad when people have said, "Well let's see what the inspector who is due next month or next year will tell us about this." Or, "Well the inspector who was here some time ago said this was the way to do it." I, at least, considered the inspector as almost the ultimate authority. Also, he was in daily touch with Washington if he needed to be. So when Mr. Henderson suggested that an inspector be given this job it indicated that he realized that someone who is sent abroad to administer a program often loses his authority when he leaves Washington seems to lose his authority. Mr. Henderson realized that the best way to do this was to send an inspector. When I was sent, Mr. Henderson dictated a telegram, which was to be sent to all posts, stating my responsibilities. Upon reading it back to me he remarked, "Well, I think the posts getting

Library of Congress

this telegram will begin to shape up so that your job will be partly done by the time you get there.”

The problem that I had to face as an inspector going to some of these posts was that the consuls had all been influenced by plays and books that were unkind to consuls saying they were not issuing visas and were causing great hardship among displaced persons because they were not getting their visas. I had to go and tell them that they would get into more trouble for not issuing visas than they would for issuing visas. So many consuls, especially in the earlier days of the service, felt that it was sometimes dangerous to issue a visa they might issue it to the wrong person and had to be careful. The days of the McCarran-Walter Act..

Q: I was just going to ask you about the McCarran-Walter Act. Was that then in effect?

WILLIAMS: Yes. People who belonged to certain organizations were considered subversive and were not admissible to the United States. Our immigration controls were very tight then. The consuls just did not want to get into trouble.

Q: Isn't it true that at that point McCarthyism was spreading throughout the Foreign Service?

WILLIAMS: Yes, exactly. Because of McCarthyism people were worried about their future. If they let a communist into this country...

Q: They remembered what happened to the China hands.

WILLIAMS: Yes, exactly. This program, as you may remember, provided for a certain number of special visas, I think the number was 205,000, which were to be issued to persons who were displaced or refugees in specific countries. The quotas for different countries were specifically fixed. The largest were to refugees in displacement camps in

Library of Congress

Germany, Italy. There were also specific numbers of visas that could be issued in Holland, for example, in Iran, in Belgian, of course, and then Hong Kong and the Far East.

I went to most of these places. My wife and children stayed in Bern, Switzerland where I was accredited for this special purpose.

Q: I see, you were located in Europe, but you were an inspector with the authority of Washington.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

Q: Wasn't that rather unusual?

WILLIAMS: I think it was entirely unusual because I was an inspector, a member of the Inspection Corps, with authority that ran wherever these visas were authorized. I actually went around the world in this duty because there were refugees in Hong Kong, and in Japan, specifically in Fukuoka where I went to see that certain visas were issued and to Tokyo. The program was administered in Washington by Pierce Gerrity, a distinguished lawyer.

Q: What part of the Department did he sit?

WILLIAMS: He had a special place. There were all kinds of refugees. Some were refugees from floods as in Fukuoka, I think. There were refugees who came from colonies. The refugees in Holland actually came from Indonesia after independence. It only took about eight or nine months to visit all these posts and make sure that the visas were issued. I went to many places in Germany. It didn't take long to persuade some of the consuls there and in Italy that they who had the largest load had better make sure the visas were issued. Because of the fear of subversives, sometimes they were over eager to turn visas down. But we took these cases higher up in Washington when they were turned down.

Library of Congress

I remember a case which required me to come back to Washington and go see Sherman Adams at the White House who overruled the Immigration Chief, General Swing. I can't remember the specifics of the case but it was a visa application which wouldn't ordinarily qualify with the immigration officers, but seemed under these special circumstances to be serious enough for us to push iwe pushed it all the way up to Sherman Adams.

Q: Speaking of the Refugee Program, what were the relationships of the Immigration and Naturalization Service?

WILLIAMS: We were very much in contact with them. We didn't always agree because the immigration officers who administration laws were bound by very strict regulations and rules with regard to permitting people to come into the country. You mentioned McCarthyism. In those days they had to be very careful and there didn't seem to be the flow of illegal immigrants as there is these days. At almost every post where they were issuing under the Refugee Relief Act there were INS officers with the particular duty of investigating. The INS inspector had to argue sometimes with the Refugee Relief Program investigators and try to show them why certain visas must not be issued. It meant, sometimes, that I would have to turn to their superiors and make a case for a visa which otherwise might be turned down. The head of the INS was General Swing, a military man. He was a fine person and my personal contacts with him were good. But issues came up that my superiors might disagree with his superiors, etc. and that is why we had to carry some of the cases higher up.

Q: As you say, even in one case, right to the White House.

WILLIAMS: The RRP investigators were often young Greek-Americans for the Greek program. A number of them after serving in this program went on to have distinguished careers in the Foreign Service.

Q: I am not sure I understand. There was something called RRP?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Yes, RRP was the Refugee Relief Program which provided for these extra visas. The investigations under that program were sometimes carried out by special investigators who were themselves INS officers. Several of them, particularly in Athens and Salonika, were Greek-Americans who later became Foreign Service officers.

Q: *I see.*

WILLIAMS: I am sorry that I am not making this clear, but I am trying to turn my memory back 35 years. We finished the Refugee Relief Program in about eight months which was less time than had originally been expected. We got all the visas issued or in the pipeline. I got word from the Department that I was to be rewarded by being offered the job of Deputy Chief of Protocol.

Q: *Deputy Chief of Protocol?*

WILLIAMS: I laughed at that and said, "You get somebody who would enjoy that more than I would. I would like to do something serious." Then they offered me the Deputy Chief of the Secretariat, which I was for awhile with Fisher Howe. I did that for awhile and then an opening came as deputy head of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs.

Q: *Today is January 23, 1991. I would like to go back for just a minute to talk about the influence of the Inspection Corps in the State Department. Would you please talk about the importance of the Inspection Corps?*

WILLIAMS: My experience with the Inspection Corps was limited to a year as a member of it. In that year I realized how strong an inspector could be in determining the way folks abroad were conducted. I was appointed an inspector in order to see that the Refugee Relief Program as authorized by Congress was carried out as it was intended to be. Mr. Dulles, then Secretary of State, had been accused of not pushing the program as it should

Library of Congress

have been pushed. Consuls were still concerned about issuing visas. They thought they had to be very careful to limit the number of visas they issued. As one consul told me, "Until you came along we thought we could get into trouble for issuing visas, we didn't realize we could get into trouble for not issuing visas." I was sent out to persuade the consuls that it was their obligation to issue the extra visas that Congress had authorized to take care of the displaced persons and other refugees after the Second World War.

Q: Did the authorization specific by country, race, etc.?

WILLIAMS: Yes. The authorization, as I remember it, specified about 210,000 extra visas. Quotas were assigned to different consulates around the world. The great majority of them were to be issued in Germany where there were displaced persons camps and refugee centers. But also a large number in Italy, some in France, Greece and Turkey, a few in England where there were some refugees. I had to go all around the world. I had to go to posts in Japan, Iran, Turkey, Greece, as well as in the larger countries of Europe.

I first found that the consuls were being extremely careful about the security risks that might be involved in issuing a visa. There were strict inspectors from the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) who passed on visas. I can't remember exactly where the inspectors were located.

Q: They actually did have some overseas?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Consuls would say to me sometimes that they believe a certain visa should be issued but that the INS inspector overseas would not agree. I remember at least one case which was so important, I believe I may have mentioned this before, that we had to take it to the White House. Sherman Adams, the Chief of Staff for President Eisenhower, had to decide on the case in the end. I believe that the INS officers generally speaking were much stricter than our consular officers. But our consular officers until I came along and exhorted them to get the visas issued were usually pretty careful.

Library of Congress

Q: So they were as strict as the INS officers?

WILLIAMS: Yes, in some places they were. I think I may have mentioned one of the first cases that I came across when I was Consul General in Salonika. It was the case of an alleged refugee who had been picked up by the bandit army, the communist army, and carried off to Yugoslavia. Eventually he returned to Salonika where his address was the same as before. The INS inspector doubted that he was really a refugee because his address was the same as it used to be. He overlooked the fact that the poor fellow who was applying had lost everything and King Constantine Street before his kidnapping was a much better place than it was when he finally got home. I urged the consul and the INS inspector to give the visa and I was ultimately supported. The man was a refugee even though his address was the same as it used to be. Most of the refugees were political, but there were a few who qualified who had been victims of floods in different parts of the world and had found themselves in Europe where they had no resources and no government at that time to take care of them.

Speaking on the whole, I would say using an inspector to get a program going is a very good system because the authority of an inspector over the career of any officer is rather important. In effect we finished the program in a much shorter time than one had expected it to be. I think Mr. Henderson thought it would take at least a year for me to do the job I had to do. But after about nine or ten months it was all done with the cooperation of many other people besides myself.

One in particular was Pierce Gerrity, a lawyer who had been put in charge of the program.

Q: As you look back on your career what do you think of the Inspection Corps generally, of the job that it does?

WILLIAMS: All my experiences in the field and the Department, and on that special mission with the Inspection Corps, have been favorable. I greatly admired Ray Miller, who

Library of Congress

was the Chief Inspector at the time I was a member. I have no criticism of any inspections that I had to deal with. That, I think, reflects on the excellence of the choice of those who appointed the inspectors.

Q: Well, as you know now, the idea of an Inspector General has spread to almost every Department in government. But I believe then it was only the armed services and the Department of State that had an Inspector General.

WILLIAMS: Well, it is a good system as long as you choose good men to operate as inspectors general.

Q: When you left the Inspection Corps you then went into the Executive Secretariat?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I had been told by Mr. Dulles this strange thing that I might have mentioned the other day. He said, "You go out and do this job as an inspector and we will pay you." I was surprised he used such a practical phrase as that. It turned out that my "pay" was to be made a Deputy Chief of Protocol. I got a kick out of that because I always thought of the Protocol Department as much too concerned with social matters and not sufficiently concerned with policy for my interest. So when I evinced a slight reluctance to become a deputy chief of Protocol, an opportunity came up so that I could become a member of the Executive Secretariat believe I was number two therwhich was much closer to policy making and something I had been familiar since I had worked with Doc Matthews some years before as his special assistant. But I didn't stay very long in the Executive Secretariat because an opportunity came up to take the job of Deputy Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs.

Q: May we just loiter a minute on the Executive Secretariat? I would like to know what you think of that operation as a function in a large organization.

WILLIAMS: Well, I am looking at it as it was 35 years ago in Dulles' time. It was essential as a means of channeling to the Secretary whatever information he needed and also as a

Library of Congress

way of getting things done that the Secretary particularly wanted done. There were enough of us in the office, I can't remember exactly how many of us, to be able to focus on any problem that came up anywhere in the world and help smooth the machinery that was necessary to get the information to the Secretary and get his action. We saved, also, a great deal of time for the Secretary, and I think even some time for the White House for the President. Mr. Dulles was an extremely busy and hardworking man. Often we had the opportunity to move things along that he was particularly interested in.

Q: When you would save time could you give a general example of how you accomplished that?

WILLIAMS: By sorting out the papers that we thought were of particular interest to him and by keeping away from him the non-essential, unimportant things that somebody wanted the Secretary to see. We also were able when he wanted something done to go to the action officer very quickly and get the action officer to do something because of the Secretary's interest. I do not know of any instance when we failed to show the Secretary what he ought to have shown to him. Not during the period I was there. My colleague Fisher Howe was mainly in charge of the Secretariat at that time. He was certainly an experienced bureaucrat, or government servant, whichever word you want to use.

Q: I think they are both good. I don't think bureaucrat is a pejorative term. I would take it also that you could coordinate things, that you could see that the different bureaus cleared documents before they went higher.

WILLIAMS: Yes, we could make sure that no action or operations concerning, let's say Cyprus, passed through without the attention of the Bureau of European Affairs, although it probably would be mainly something belonging to the Bureau of the Middle Eastern Affairs.

Q: I see.

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: It was a good experience. One certainly saw all the intricacies of our policies and how policy that one Bureau thought it should set also needed input of another Bureau.

Q: Now, at that time in the Department, let us say there was disagreement between two different Bureaus, the Bureau of European Affairs and the Bureau of Middle Eastern Affairs. Did you have a Deputy Under Secretary then, such as Matthews... ?

WILLIAMS: Such as Robert Murphy. Doc Matthews and Robert Murphy at different times. They had enough influence to make sure that two or three geographical areas were able to coordinate their efforts.

Of course some of our problems have arisen from the failure of that kind of coordination. We may have gotten much too deep into the Vietnam problem because of the European Bureau's sympathy for the French. But if the Vietnam problem had been handled by the Far Eastern Bureau they would have had a different attitude. The European Bureau's main concern was what the French wanted. I think there have been one or two good pieces written on that. I remember that when cases came up that involved Vietnam as it did in the 1950s, the Far Eastern Bureau was about to take some action on it. The Deputy Under Secretary might say, "Look, this concerns the European Bureau. Make sure they get everything that comes in on that subject and that they have a chance to clear on anything that goes out." Foreign policy can be a very intricate thing.

Q: Absolutely. Could you see that kind of function of the Secretariat in a smaller organization that coordination that keeps and sorts information for the chief? Could you see that function in, let's say, an embassy?

WILLIAMS: Yes. It could help a small organization, but I don't think it should ever have too many people in it. It should have people with a broad outlook and enough understanding to make sure that the whole picture was considered whenever an action was undertaken.

Library of Congress

Q: After the Secretariat, where did you go?

WILLIAMS: I went to the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs. I was sent there mainly because I had had considerable dealing with the problems of Cyprus when I was Consul General in Salonika. I knew pretty well what problems Greece faced. Some people questioned whether our relations with these three countries should have been brought together. It didn't seem that the problems of Greece had anything to do with the problems of Iran, although ancient Greece and ancient Persia had a great deal to do with each other. Somehow those three ex-empires, Greece, Turkey and Iran were engaged in affairs which were of particular interest to us and were different than the affairs of the Arab world. They were neighbors of the Arabs but, themselves, were not Arab. I think Iran had a fair number of Arabs; the Turks had a small number of Arabs, but their problems were really different.

At the time that I was in that Office...

Q: Which is 1956 until 1959?

WILLIAMS: Yes. At the time that I was in that Office more than half of our time, I believe, was devoted to the question of Cyprus because Cyprus was keeping the Greeks and Turks at odds with each other and interfering with their participation in NATO. I, with my colleagues Ben Wood, Bruce Laingen, who were working mostly on Greek matters, developed a proposal for the independence of Cyprus. We pushed it quite a lot. We had colleagues in the European Bureau who thought that might be the best idea. The Greeks, themselves, wanted all of Cyprus; the Turks wanted Cyprus too. They, the Turks, had a large minority of Turks residing in Cyprus. But we were able to take initiatives which later developed, with the help of some of our friends in the European Bureau, into the final solution. I remember very well the Assistant Secretary for the Near East at that time, Bill Rountree, telling us that we should go ahead and work on it, but he didn't believe the question of Cyprus would be solved until a lot of blood had been shed. In the long run

Library of Congress

we know that there was a good deal of violence and even in recent years there has been trouble in Cyprus. From the standpoint of NATO it was better to put this at least to the side so that it wouldn't interfere with what Greece and Turkey did in their NATO roles.

Turkey wasn't an enormous problem in those days. Turkey was developing and getting along pretty well, as I remember.

But Iran also took a lot of our time and attention. In those days we were, it seemed to me, almost wholeheartedly in support of the Shah. The Shah had a very close relationship to Mr. Henderson when Mr. Henderson was Under Secretary of State. The Shah was very young when he ascended the Peacock Throne and Mr. Henderson had a strong personal influence over him.

Q: Had Mr. Henderson been ambassador to Iran at the time the Shah ascended the throne?

WILLIAMS: I am not sure exactly then, but when the Shah was a very young man.

The Shah cooperated with us in many, many different ways. One of the most significant as we look back was his effort to provide us with all the intelligence that he felt we needed. I am afraid that it was a mistake for us to base our policy so much on the intelligence that the Shah provided. His intelligence service, SAVAK, was a very serious organization. I am not sure we would have condoned all the measures it took to extract information from people. I believe in the long run it was a mistake for us to depend as much as we did on the Shah. We probably underestimated both the importance of nationalistic feelings and the depth of the hostility to the Shah that existed in Iran. We should have, looking back of course, emphasized more our own systems of collecting intelligence; developed our own specialists and not depended on the Shah.

I wasn't very deeply concerned in Iranian affairs during the whole period of time that I was in GTI (Greece, Turkey and Iran). But I did feel that we made a mistake in depending

Library of Congress

so much on that one man, the Shah. I think that had we not interfered, and if Iranian nationalism had developed from Mossadegh on we would be in a better position than we were when Iran fell into the hands of Khomeini and his people. It may be a lesson to us of the importance of not relying on the intelligence of an interested party even if he is the monarch of a foreign country. If we relied more upon depth of historic knowledge and intimate knowledge of the people of a country, that is much more important than taking as we seem to do most of our intelligence about a country from the intelligence service of that country. I wish I knew more about Iran, but I have not been able to follow it recently. I left that office in 1959.

Q: May I ask you if you can recall in that particular office any broad policies you were trying to follow or implement?

WILLIAMS: Yes, we were trying to strengthen Iran financially, economically and militarily. We extended a good deal of financial and military aid to Iran.

Q: This was true of Greece and Turkey as well, wasn't it?

WILLIAMS: Yes. They were our supports in that part of the world and we felt that Iran was a bastion of support for us with its long border with the Soviet Union and with its influence in the Persian Gulf states.

Q: This was part of our containment policy of the Soviet Union.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

Q: At that time was there in place a regional security organization? Was SEATO in existence?

WILLIAMS: It was the Baghdad Pact CENTO that was the regional security alliance.

Q: Do you recall what CENTO stood for?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Central Treaty Organization, I believe. Sometimes I used to think it was largely the product of Herman Eilts' typewriter. Eilts was a very important figure in Middle Eastern policy, especially in building up the defenses of our friends there. I remember once going to see Mr. Dulles to get his approval of a \$25 million dollar aid package for Iran and made as much of a case as I could for it. I believe the answer came back from Mr. Dulles that he was very much in favor of it, but some of his senior colleagues said that they wanted to give even more to it. \$25 million dollars doesn't seem like very much these days, but it was a lot at that time and meant a lot to the Shah.

Q: Speaking in today's, 1991, dollars we are talking about at least \$250 million at least. In your work of strengthening these three countries, would you say a word about other agencies that were involved, such as the Foreign Assistance Agency?

WILLIAMS: The Foreign Assistance Agency, was it AID then or still FICA?

Q: Well, in those days, I think it could have been either the Foreign Operations Administration or later, the International Cooperation Administration, ICA.

WILLIAMS: That agency had extremely able people concerned with it. I remember quite well, I believe it was Robert Herder, who was one of our representatives out there. I can't remember where Len Saccio was?

Q: Len Saccio was with the aid agency in the late 50s.

WILLIAMS: We had very capable and able people working in the aid agency. It was natural because it was such an important part of our policy.

Q: I think within the State Department you also had a coordinating mechanism, Douglas Dillon, who coordinated aid as welthe military with the economic.

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: I think it was a good period as far as aid programs were concerned. The pity is that our total intelligence wasn't as good as it should have been. Also our senior officers at the Secretary level didn't pay as much attention to, or weren't supplied with the necessary intelligence, and made decisions that could have been better. I'm sorry I can't offer you a good example of that right now.

Q: But this is your general opinion and your observation.

WILLIAMS: It is. There were too many of us, I suppose, who followed a policy without ourselves understanding it, but simply because we understood that that was what the Secretary wanted us to do; and that was what the President wanted us to do. We did things that looked as if they would satisfy our people from above and maybe we didn't dissent enough. What I mean to say is that we could have, if we had known more ourselves, we could have objected. An important matter put to an officer such as myself, who knew only a little about it would soon find himself involved with decisions and actions that might be done better by someone who had spent more time on the problem and had a deeper understanding. Maybe this is a reason for not moving people as often as I had been moveand many of us were moved. Mr. Fulbright often said that if they left us in the same place a little longer we would produce better ideas and have more information.

Q: That has been a problem over the years with the Department where you had before Wristonization desk officers and office directors who were civil servants who stayed in those jobs and became experts on the area. But they also became rigid in their views of the area.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that is true.

Q: You have this problem.

WILLIAMS: The generalist and the specialist.

Library of Congress

Q: You say that perhaps you took too literally the orders from above and perhaps there wasn't enough dissent from the bottom. If you had dissented, how do you think that would have been received by the layers above you?

WILLIAMS: In the case of Iran at that time, the layers above, namely Mr. Henderson more than anybody else, would not have been happy because his knowledge was considered to be the best we had. One had such respect for him, for his knowledge of diplomacy and his knowledge of the area. It would have been very difficult to dissent. I can't remember anybody dissenting, although some of the people in the intelligence agencies might have known enough to dissent, but they didn't.

Q: Was CENTO a very strong organization?

WILLIAMS: It is ironic today that CENTO was also called the Baghdad Pact. An American security organization which developed first in Baghdad.

Q: Speaking as we are in January 1991.

WILLIAMS: At that time we had the illusion, I suppose, that those countries were strong supporters of ours. It was a good idea. Mr. Dulles had that idea of surrounding the Soviet Union by pactwe called it pactomania I believe at one point.

Q: I had never heard that. Very good.

WILLIAMS: There was NATO, and SEATO and with CENTO in between we had a legal structure for containment. But that proved falsor rather an illusory sense of security came from it.

Q: Again the policy was mostly aimed at containment of the Soviet Union and communism in general.

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: I think someone ought to do a paper on the Baghdad Pact, CENTO, and how it looks from the distance of January 1991.

Q: You know right now they are talking about some kind of a Middle Eastern Pact when this war is over with Iraq.

WILLIAMS: This is a Middle Eastern conference which will be very difficult.

Q: Then you moved on to become Ambassador to Israel?

WILLIAMS: No I was the number two in Israel. I was the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) in Israel. I went to Israel about the same time as Ogden Reid was appointed as ambassador.

Q: Was Mr. Reid a career Foreign Service officer?

WILLIAMS: He was not a career Foreign Service officer. He was a very young former publisher of the International Herald Tribune in Paris and the New York Herald Tribune. He was a member of the family that owned the Tribune. He had excellent connections within that family. I remember that when Mr. Reid was nominated to go to Israel he had four or five days of very strong questioning before Senator Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Fulbright, in effect, was not pleased with the appointment because he didn't think that Mr. Reid had enough experience in diplomacy, or enough knowledge of the area to have such a delicate job. But Mr. Reid stood up well in his four days of inquisition. I would like to say on the record that during my service with him of about a year and a half he proved to be a very hard working, conscientious, and sincere officer who, I think, made no mistakes and carried on his job as ambassador very well. The Israelis had great respect for him.

Israel at that time was quite different from Israel of today. The dominate political, emotional, cultural feelings were those of European German Zionist. Their principle figure in the country was, of course, David Ben-GurionDavid Ben-Gurion and his Foreign Minister,

Library of Congress

Golda Meir. I came to admire both of them enormously. I did not know Ben-Gurion as well as I knew Mrs. Meir. But I do remember Ben-Gurion used to warn the Israelis of the cultural and political changes that were taking place in the country. The old European Jews were outnumbered by the Sephardic, the Spanish, North African, Middle Eastern Jews, largely from the Yemen and North Africa who increased their population enormously and who had a different attitude towards the Arabs than the German Jews.

The original Zionists, and I think this is an important point that people may have forgotten in our country, had no quarrel with the Arabs. They bought land from the Arabs, they cooperated with the Arabs, they worked with the Arabs, they were friendly with the Arabs, they spoke Arabic. Most of my friends did not foresee trouble with the Arabs because they thought they could get along with them because they had worked with them so much in the days before the establishment of the State of Israel.

On the other hand, the North African Jews, the Sephardic, and Middle Eastern Jews had been badly treated by the Arabs, or felt that they had been badly treated over the years. They were kind of eager, it seemed to me, to get back at the Arabs to revenge themselves with the Arabs. As they did this and increased in numbers, trouble with the Arabs increased, relations became worse.

But when I was there there were no serious incidents. Ben-Gurion was convinced that they could get on well together. Mrs. Meir felt the same. So there was no feeling of the need for great expansion of territory. They were content with a Jewish homeland which had defensible borders. There was a particular foresighted and wisdom on Ben-Gurion's part and Mrs. Meir's that they could do a lot for their neighbors in the Arab Moslem countries. Perhaps not so much with the immediate ones as the ones more distant. They had conceived of what was very much like our later Peace Corps. They sent bright young men and women, able and technically trained, out to help other countries develop a particular industry or solve problems.

Library of Congress

For example, they sent a number of young men out to Ghana where they helped develop forest products such as ply board. They sent agricultural experts to Iran where they showed how wood for construction could be produced in sometimes relatively barren country using good systems of irrigation. They developed friendships with these countries. I had one particular Israeli friend, Ezra Danin, who was terribly important to Iran because of the help he had been able to organize for them in technical matters.

When these young men went out they were usually received by Ben-Gurion. He patted them on the back and told them what a good job he expected them to do and wished them luck. They went out with much enthusiasm and the work usually resulted in increasing friendship for Israel. Somewhere, about 1959 or 60, I haven't got my hands on it, there was an excellent article in the Foreign Affairs Quarterly about the way the Israelis were winning friends in the Middle Eastern world by this technical assistance. The old Israelis felt that cooperation in economic and technical matters with neighbors would help to strengthen their position.

I might mention also something called Solel Boneh. It was a construction company organized in Israel which did public works in nearby countries for example, in Turkey and other places under contracts.

Q: This was a private company?

WILLIAMS: It was sponsored by the Israeli government. It was very important and improved relations. I am very disappointed not to have heard more of this sort of thing since I was in Israel 30 years ago. Unfortunately, Israel has been so preoccupied with its security that the program may have been completely abandoned. I haven't had an opportunity to ask any of my Israeli friends whether any of it is going on. Danin is no longer living. But he was an outstanding example of the kind of technical assistance Israel had to offer. He showed me once an orange grove which he had created in a desert by selecting spots to put trees, in rows, of course, and then digging the sand away from them and

Library of Congress

pouring in good soil, setting up a windbreak to prevent more sand from coming in and thus building orchards in the desert making the desert bloom. And that was what Israel did.

I remember particularly how impressed I was with their development and when I said goodbye to Mrs. Meir, she asked me why I was leaving and I said that the President had asked me to go as ambassador somewhere else. And she said, "Where are you going?" I said, "El Salvador." She said, "El Salvador? That is a place where you can really do something." I said, "Yes, Mrs. Meir, I hope we can help do some of the things you have done in your neighboring country."

While I was in Israel there were occasional border incidents with neighboring countries and sometimes Israel had to take measures for its own protection. Occasionally we had to remonstrate with them about something that seemed to upset the peace of the area.

I remember once when I was Charg# d'Affaires going into Mrs. Meir and telling her quite carefully something that the Department had asked me to saremonstrating with Israel for its action in one of these events, and she just looked at me and said, "Who is going to give Nasser a lecture this morning?" She was quite accustomed to understanding. She understood quite well why a person like myself would be asked to make such a protest. And she received it.

Q: What did the Department feel, that this was provocation by the Israelis?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Occasionally they felt that Israel's defense positions or movements along a border might be provocations to Arab neighbors and we were trying above all to prevent any conflict.

Q: What do you feel were your policy objectives vis-a-vis Israel when you were there?

WILLIAMS: I believed Israel must develop its own resources, become nearly self-sufficient; should have adequate defenses within the territories which had been provided under the

Library of Congress

Independence agreements; that she should respect the resolutions of the United Nations; and be content to live in the homeland with satisfactorily defended borders. We did not believe Israel should expand its territory. We sought to persuade Israel to be content within those territorial boundaries. In our day we would not have done what was later done. Our government seemed to encourage Israel to move into Lebanon. We knew Israel had good armed forces, we had unlimited admiration for their technical, scientific, and military abilities. We thought the rest of the world could learn a lot from them, but we believed that the borders as they were then were sufficient. We maintained our embassy, as we still do, in Tel Aviv because of the interest of other countries in Jerusalem.

Q: You say you feel Israel should comply with UN resolutions. Doesn't that imply face-to-face talks with the other Arab countries?

WILLIAMS: I can't remember whether at that time it implied that, I believe it did.

Q: About the only Arab country that has done that is Egypt as I recall Sadat.

WILLIAMS: Yes. One thing that was terribly important at that time was Israel's nuclear research and development. We respected Israel's right to secrecy as far as its own defense is concerned, but Israel, I think, did not tell us all we might have known about its nuclear development. There was a reactor near Be'er Sheva and Dimona. One day the Ambassador and I were in that general neighborhood and we asked about those buildings and were told that they were new textile plants. Eventually when that got into the American press it led to a very amusing article by Art Buchwald about the smashing tailors of Be'er Sheva.

Q: For the whole time you were in Israel did you serve under the same ambassador?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I was only in Israel from July 1959 to January 1961. Ambassador Reid was there a few days ahead of me and left a few weeks after I left. We had a great admiration for the ability of the people with whom we dealt. I believe that we were on a

Library of Congress

very frank basis of relations with the Israelis. We felt we could trust them. I think that that was right. One of our functions was to help interpret Israel to visiting Americans, especially senators and congressmen. I think they found that they were dealing with very straight forward people when they were dealing with the Israelis. One thing that is significant to me is that when we were there, Ambassador Reid and I, we had very little to do with Begin and nothing, as far as I can remember, with Shamir. The people with whom we dealt were the old Zionists and Sabras. Mrs. Meir was our principal contact, I would say, but General Dayan was also someone on whom we depended a great deal. Walter Eytan one of their great diplomats was someone we dealt with. He had been a don in Oxford, I think, at one time. And, of course, Abba Eban, was very influential at that time. For anyone like myself to go to Israel then was an experience of great stimulation. The mental liveliness of the people, their ability to see what had to be done and to do it. Everybody had something to do in developing the country and in the preservation of the country. All of that came with outstanding cultural and literary achievements. The Israeli Orchestra and the Mann auditorium rate as great examples of their cultural achievement. One would expect it naturally. So I suppose of all the places where I have served, there was none where there had been such stimulation to think, to act and to do the right thing.

I regretted very much when things turned out as Ben-Gurion told us it would when the Sephardic Jews began to increase their influence. The Sephardic Jews wanted to get a bit of their own back with the neighboring Arabs. They were the ones who were interested in pushing out the borders. They would have liked to take over a great deal of land around Israel. They were responsible for the eventual occupation of the West Bank, which took place long after my departure.

There is another thing I should mention which was the wise effort to receive and assimilate Jews from wherever they might have come. They had a system of cultural interchange which meant that they would settle people from four or five different countries and cultures in one area. The schools, the businesses, and the offices of these people would be located in the center of the area where they would all come together to study, work and enjoy

Library of Congress

entertainment during the day. This is a very brief explanation of what I thought was a very wise way of letting people become Israelis, develop their Israeli national feeling and at the same time not being completely shut off from their old contacts of the old country.

Another thing that impressed me so much was kibbutz life. My wife and I were very interested in learning about kibbutz life when we first started studying Hebrew at the Foreign Service Institute before we went to Israel. We learned the phrases that would be necessary and useful in visiting a kibbutz. We loved the kibbutz feeling. The young men who dominated them were very often those who had been the leaders in the Independence War.

I was really disappointed that my time in Israel was cut short. In late December, 1960 the ambassador called me into his office and said he had a telegram saying that there had been a revolution in El Salvador and President Eisenhower wanted to send me there as ambassador. Would I accept? Of course I accepted. But it meant breaking off almost an education in Israel.

When I got to Washington after that, Senator Fulbright was mainly interested not in my going to El Salvador, but in my staying such a short time in Israel. He said, "If you had stayed longer in Israel, you would know about that atomic program they are carrying on. If you fellows would stay where you were for a while you would know what was going on." Some people thought he was insulting me, but I didn't mind it very much. I was, myself, sorry that I hadn't been longer in Israel. I don't know if there is anything else you would like me to comment on about Israel.

Q: I would like you to comment, maybe at the end of this interview, your feelings about career or non-career persons being appointed as chiefs of mission. So your time with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee wasn't too bad a time?

WILLIAMS: No. There was some eagerness to get me to El Salvador, and as a result I think I was put on the program for confirmation hearings ahead of George Ball. Tom

Library of Congress

Mann was in a hurry for me to go to El Salvador. When I said I didn't want to go until I was properly confirmed and until I had said goodbye to President Kennedy. I think I was the first ambassador to be sent abroad by President Kennedy. Adlai Stevenson had gone to New York a few days before. You were probably running personnel things at that time.

Q: No, at that time I was in the foreign aid agency. In fact I had the office of Central America and Caribbean and Mexican Affairs.

WILLIAMS: The hearings of that day were mainly George Ball and me. It seems ridiculous to spend as much time on my hearings and George Ball, but I think Mr. Fulbright had made up his mind that he was going to establish the point that Foreign Service officers should not be moved so quickly from one post to another. I happened to be the first one to come along which gave him the opportunity to do that.

Q: Did you get a chance to talk with the President before you went to El Salvador?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I did. I made my call and the President said, "Ambassador I am glad that you are going to El Salvador. That is our number one problem." By "that," I think he meant Latin America or Central America. We talked a little about that and personal things I had known him and his sister quite well when we were in England before the war and I was at Oxford University.

Q: Which sister?

WILLIAMS: Kathleen. I had only met Jack one day when I had gone to the embassy to meet his sister and she introduced me to him. Kathleen was killed in an airplane accident.

Q: She is the one who married the Lord... ?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Hartington, I think was his name. William John Robert Cavendish, Marquess of Hartington. She would come up to the Oxford University for the dances with me one time. The Kennedys have been very nice to me but I had barely met the President.

When I said goodbye to Secretary Rusk, I had a very interesting conversation. He said, "I haven't got anything that I want to bother you with now, but we are going to want you to do what you can to help any of those people who are working for the integration of Central American institutions." I was struck by that and thought it was very important. Just a few years ago I had occasion to refer to it and when I did so I wrote to Mr. Rusk in Athens, Georgia, where he was retired, and said that I remembered that part of our conversation and didn't think there was any memorandum in the files about it and I wanted to be reassured that that was what he had said to me. And he wrote back a nice letter saying that yes, it was what was on his mind then.

Q: In fact since I was involved in Central American affairs in 1959, 60, 61, that was the push for integration. Len Saccio and I pushed on the Central American Bank

WILLIAMS: Oh, great. And the common market?

Q: Yes. Tom Mann was pushing for integration at that point and so was Mr. Dillon as well.

WILLIAMS: I have always been glad that Mr. Rusk said that to me. I have referred to it a number of times since. I am only sorry that there is nothing much left of Central American integration except INCAE, the school for management education.

As far as Central American integration is concern, I feel great disappointment that other things failed. The common market has become very weak. When Mr. Kennedy came as President to Central America, I had an opportunity to introduce to him one of the leading Central American businessmen, statesman, Francisco De Sola. When I introduced him, the President asked De Sola what Central America needed more than anything else. De Sola replied that what we really needed was a school like Harvard Business School

Library of Congress

where men could be trained as executives to compete in the world. Within three weeks of that conversation, the first professors from Harvard came to Central America to study the problem. In 1964, such a school had been established. George Lodge, I remember, came down from the Harvard Business School and spent a lot of time in Central America. Today that school which has campuses in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica, is the only real institution of Central America that has managed to survive.

But more than that it has become terribly important and has a big influence not only in the Central American and Caribbean area, but even beyond. I have seen recent figures something like 2,000 MBAs have been issued and many thousands of people have gone to the school's short courses on various subjects. Even in the unhappy days of Daniel Ortega, most of the Nicaraguan cabinet had graduated from INCAE. Almost every country has its alumni in important positions either in government or private affairs. When the Central American presidents wanted to meet together, the only place they had where they could get on common ground during recent troubles three or four years ago, was at the campus of INCAE in Costa Rica.

Well, that's the good side of things, the bad...

Q: Before we leave INCAE, do you have any knowledge why they located it in Nicaragua rather than in one of the other Central American countries?

WILLIAMS: Originally it was located in Nicaragua, I suppose because of its central position, I really don't know. At that time Somoza was still in power and he was eager to have it there.

Q: Probably we considered it the most stable country too.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that is possible.

Library of Congress

Q: We ought to recall, Mr. Ambassador, that this wasn't the Somoza that later became the Somoza who was ousted.

WILLIAMS: No, this was the old honcho.

Q: Today is February 6, 1991. I believe, Mr. Ambassador, we had just begun talking about your assignment to El Salvador. What did you feel was your main objectives to accomplish when you were in El Salvador?

WILLIAMS: When I spoke to Dean Rusk to say goodbye to him he didn't outline any particular objectives except to do what I could to help all those who were working for the integration of Central America—the old idea of the Central American Union.

But aside from that there were other goals which I felt were necessary for us to face. Particularly the goal of economic development in Central America. Central America had been left out it seemed of most of the progress of the world, but the people of Central America were beginning to realize that there were things that they could do. This attitude grew mainly among the young people—the students. It was not necessarily shared by the wealthy families—the 14 families as they were sometimes called, or the Catorce or the Oligarchy. Those people were quite satisfied with the country as it was. They were making money out of the export of coffee and sugar and they were able to make it by taking advantage of the low wages of their labor. Labor was plentiful and wages were low.

But among the students, the intellectuals and among some farsighted Salvadoran businessmen there was a feeling that there was a great possibility ahead for development. It was marked in El Salvador especially by the inauguration of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) which happened to take place a few months before I arrived. It reflected the interest of the Eisenhower Administration in solving some of the deep rooted problems of Central America, particularly the problems of economic developments, the

Library of Congress

problem of social injustice, etc. Eisenhower, himself, had been impressed by the need to do something about this because of Nixon's experiences. When Nixon was Vice President he was badly treated in Lima and was nearly killed by a demonstration in Caracas. President Eisenhower had asked his brother, Milton, to go into Latin America and see what was going on and tell him what should be done. And as you know, Milton Eisenhower did recommend that we pay more attention to Latin America and do something to help eliminate the social injustices and the backwardness there. The idea of reform of this sort had taken root in El Salvador and I considered it my goal to help promote, in any way that was appropriate, institutions of economic development and try to help those who wanted to enliven the atmosphere the way the progressive people had been doing in Israel, the country I had just left. And as I think I mentioned earlier, when I left Israel, Golda Meir, the great Foreign Minister at that time, said that El Salvador was a great place for me to go because you can really do something there. It was a great opportunity and the goals were economic development, elimination of social injustice and integration of the countries of Central America.

When I got there I found that our embassy had been pretty well scared by the threat of communism which was something that the wealthy families had promoted. They had told people in our embassy how communistic some of the Salvadoran student leaders were. In fact, members of our embassy were alleged to have helped to overthrow the reform government established by Fabio Castillo and his friends in the autumn of 1960, just a few weeks before Eisenhower proposed to appoint me ambassador to El Salvador. That coup came soon after Ambassador Thorsten Kalijarvi had recommended to Washington that we not recognize the junta over which Fabio Castillo presided. Fabio Castillo himself has testified before Congress that the Charg# d'Affaires of our embassy came to see him soon after the coup and had been accompanied by a member of one of the wealthy families, who said to our Charg# as they were talking to Castillo, "You see the way this man talks? He is a communist and you ought to be careful of him." And, of course, our Charg# duly

Library of Congress

reported all that and the State Department had decided on Mr. Kalijarvi's recommendation that we should not recognize that particular junta.

That junta actually was overthrown in January of 1961 just a few days before I had arrived to take my job as ambassador. When it was overthrown there were loud accusations against our embassy, and particularly our military mission, which said they had been involved in the overthrow.

There is a funny little story, I don't know how true it is, but at this time there were grounds to suspect that the military mission might be involved because the newspapers published pictures of the officers at Fort Zapote , the Head of the Salvadoran Military Command, as if they were taking part in the revolution. This always worried me a little bit, but I asked the Chief of Mission what had happened and he said, "We didn't have anything to do with the overthrow of the government. When he heard the shooting and knew that there was something going on, he went down to Fort Zapote and stood around trying to find out what was going to happen. The newspaper people came in and took pictures of him as if he was directing it."

In any event, the Fabio Castillo government was overthrown just at the time that I arrived to take up my duties as ambassador. The Fabio Castillo government was considered to be unfriendly to the wealthy families and they were very glad to see it go. The new government which took over was dominated by one Colonel Julio Rivera. He turned out to be quite a reformist himself. It was almost inevitable that someone should come along who was interested in reform because reforms was a crying need for the country. Colonel Rivera's junta which called itself directorio was very enthusiastic about taking measures to improve the economic conditions in the country. I was able to present my credentials to them and to work fairly closely with them in their plans. They needed money for infrastructure, but they also needed money for economic development, for manufacturing, etc. As we began to work with them, we found their enthusiasm was enormous. Rivera had drawn into his government several internationally respected economists, Salvadorans,

Library of Congress

who had worked in Washington, the World Bank and other organizations. They undertook a number of measures for social improvement which really began to have an effect. They supported, strongly, the Central American common market and the Central American Bank. They sought loans from the United States for health centers, for schools, for investment in factories, etc.

Our government was rather enthusiastic. General Cutler, I believe, was in charge of one aspect of our foreign aid programs and he was very receptive to Salvadoran requests. Salvadorans sometimes didn't know how to make up the right forms to get their money, but nevertheless, I was able to get General Cutler to send someone to El Salvador who would help them with the forms.

Q: That is important.

WILLIAMS: He chose Robert Nathan on the recommendation of Theodore Moscoso. Robert Nathan, the economist who had done so much in our New Deal, established a mission in El Salvador for management and advising on economic development. This was extremely successful.

Meanwhile, wherever I went in El Salvador, I heard enthusiasm for the new United States government, the Kennedy Administration and some sort of eagerness to hear more about what President Kennedy meant when he made his speeches about helping other countries. I went out one day to an old gold mine in the eastern part of the country near San Miguel. When I arrived I saw workers with banners, plaques all around them welcoming me, but also saying "we need loans, we need jobs, we don't want gifts." That may have been encouraged by some of the officials in the Department of Development in the Salvadoran government. But, nevertheless, the people at the mines accosted me and asked me what I was going to do for them. The whole spirit at that time as far as people generally concerned was expectation or something.

Library of Congress

At this time I should say just a word about the social conditions in El Salvador. El Salvador's problems are deeply rooted in centuries old injustice. A very few people own the great majority of the land, of the wealth of the country. They were protecting that position by the military which was well under their control. There had been in 1932 in El Salvador a big uprising which was attributed to the communists, which was called the communist conspiracy to overthrow the country. Well, I don't believe Moscow, itself, was necessarily behind this revolt, but it did not take Moscow to tell the Salvadoran peasants of 1932 that they were hungry. They were hungry and they did rise up and demand a better life. The uprising was a bloody one. It was put down with considerable bloodshed. General Maximiliano H. Martinez commanded the troops that suppressed the rising peasants on that occasion. I have heard something like 30,000 died. That created a very strong fear among the wealthy people of El Salvador that once again there might be an explosion from the unrest of the peasants.

You can face something like that two ways. You could build up your internal police force, the military, to keep the peasants under control, or you could undertake to remove the causes of the unrest. The Kennedy program which eventually became the Alliance for Progress, was concentrated on trying to remove the causes of unrest. To help the people to build up a fairer society. Fortunately, the government which was headed by Colonel Rivera was fully committed to the same sort of approach. In the years I was in El Salvador, Rivera was constantly promoting the development of health centers, schools, highways, communications, but also industry. He had been persuaded, certainly by his contacts with Robert Nathan, that you can't give the people more pie until you bake a bigger pie. I can remember Bob Nathan making the gesture to him and Rivera repeating the same gesture to me several weeks later.

So Rivera wanted to encourage the development of factories around the country which could offer jobs to people and raise the standard of living and bring into the country the money that was necessary for all forms of social improvement.

Library of Congress

I, myself, went once or twice to the United States to see American businessmen and tell them about the opportunities in El Salvador, especially the opportunities in Central America, because common market made it possible for them to see in Central America a market of 17 or 20 million consumers, rather than four or five individual markets of four or five million consumers. This took hold quite well.

One of the best examples of how well the common market worked was the experience of Sears, Roebuck. Sears, Roebuck as soon as there was an opportunity for a common market began to develop in each of the countries in Central America factories that produced products that could be sold throughout the whole region under the banner of Central American product *Productus Centroamericanos*.

For example, Sears, Roebuck could make furniture in Honduras, household appliances in Nicaragua, clothing in El Salvador, automobile parts in Guatemala, other things in Costa Rica, and sell them all over Central America. Officials have told me that that was really a great period for them in Central America. They had their money invested in good factories and they established the technical requirements so that the products were good and they relieved Central American countries of the need of putting out scarce hard currency on imports.

Most of the intelligent wealthy applauded this and invested in various of these companies that came in. It was very logical, especially to people like Francisco De Sola, the leader of the Central American businessmen in that day. It was very clear to them that the country needed social reforms and that the social reforms could be paid for by this improvement of the economy.

However, there was a reaction. The reaction was rather strong and often personally directed at me. One day I read in the newspapers that the government of President Rivera had established a minimum wage of a dollar a day. Almost immediately there was a stir among coffee planters. They came to my office protesting. They assumed that I had been

Library of Congress

the one who was responsible for the minimum wage of a dollar a day. I remember talking to one group and saying, "What do you mean complaining to me? I have nothing to do with it. This was done by Rivera." Well, Central American businessmen didn't always believe that the American Ambassador had not done such a thing, because they were accustomed to countries where American Ambassadors had passed on legislation before it was enacted and frequently had told governments what to do and what not to do. I had absolutely no knowledge of this minimum wage.

One particular group of rather intelligent people said that I shouldn't have done it and should go down and tell the President to withdraw it. I said, "A dollar a day? What would you think of my reporting to Mr. Arthur Goldberg, our Secretary of Labor, that you objected to paying your laborers a dollar a day. He would think you were objecting to a dollar an hour and would certainly have no sympathy for you." Then they said, "But in our economy that is all that we can do. We can't do that. It will ruin us all." I said, "In Costa Rica they pay the equivalent of 3 or 4 dollars a day." These chaps had the gall to say to me, "Well, Costa Rican labor produces more and naturally it gets paid more." I said, "Well maybe if you paid your people a little more they would produce more."

Anyway it went on and on like that. The government of President Rivera at one time decreed the nationalization of the National Bank. The National Bank up to that time had been a private organization, but the government thought that it would be better for it to be a national organization, a government organization. They complained to me about that. I said, "I know nothing about it."

Q: The people that complained to you, they were who?

WILLIAMS: The ones who complained represented the wealthy families. Mostly coffee and sugar. However, when these complaints were becoming rather bad, I invited members of the American business community to come to the embassy and talk to me about how they felt about it. It was very interesting. These American businessmen divided straight down

Library of Congress

the middle. Those who were engaged in coffee or were married to families who had coffee, cotton, sugar and bananas, benefited from these extremely low wages. They objected to all the social reform legislature. But the other American businessmen who were there, those who benefited from higher purchasing power from the people, were pleased with all these reforms. The man from Sterling Products said "Of course, I can't sell aspirin to anyone who makes less than a dollar a day." The man who represented Standard Oil said that they don't buy kerosene, oil if they are making as little money as that. They were all in favor of more production. Even the Pan American Airlines representative said that with such low purchasing power we don't sell tickets. So most of the Americans were in favor of developing and improving the standard of living and making it possible for the economy, itself, to support the reforms which were necessary.

However, the very wealthy people never gave up, the ones who were dependent upon coffee and cotton and sugar cane. They never gave up and even sent a delegation to Washington to find out if I was really backed by the State Department. In those days when Ed Martin and Bob Wood were running Latin America, our government was devoted to the Alliance of Progress and such things, I almost laughed at these Salvadorans. I said, "Of course, we are for it. Haven't you read about President Kennedy's support for the Alliance for Progress?"

An interesting thing that happened to me was that 10 or 15 years earlier when I went as Secretary to the embassy to El Salvador, there was not much talk of reform and things were as they had been in ancient times, the wealthy people were very attentive to uwe went to parties at all the plantations. But when the American Ambassador began to support Salvadoran leaders who wanted reforms, he was sort of boycotted. It was fun for me, on the other hand, because I got to know the intellectuals of the county better. People like Alejandro Dagoberto Marroquin, a Salvadoran sociologist who had helped Oscar Lewis write his book on Mexico and the poor people in other parts of the world. We also had at the embassy from time to time, Pedro Geoffroy Rives, a local intellectual and writer who often made fun of the aristocracy of the oligarchy. It was interesting to have these

Library of Congress

people around, but they were not accustomed to going to the same parties with members of the oligarchy.

Nevertheless, we did maintain good relations with many of the wealthy families. Some of them had members who wanted to make progress and eliminate the social injustices that had caused so much trouble for so long. I think particularly of Francisco De Sola, who was head of one of the largest commercial and agricultural family companies. He was the one who, when he met President Kennedy, suggested that Central America would benefit from a business school. President Kennedy agreed and almost immediately professors from Harvard came down to help start a business school which actually went into operation in 1965 and is today one of the strongest institutions of Central American cooperation. It is called INCAE, Central American Institute for Education in Management.

There were some young men ...one Henrique Alvarez who was later tortured and murdered by a death squad.

Q: Was he a member of one of the large families?

WILLIAMS: He was a member of the oligarchy, of the large Alvarez family, but he was one who believed that you had to do something to improve the lot of the people.

Unfortunately the common market, which worked so well, began to fade out when the soccer war broke out between El Salvador and Honduras. It happened in 1969 after I left. It was a frontier dispute which never should have happened and was finally settled by the OAS.

When I left El Salvador, I thought it was making so much progress on the road to social reform and a solid economy. I thought it was making so much progress that it would go on forever. I was glad to see that all these changes had taken place largely under the Kennedy Administration with the Alliance for Progress. I have been disappointed to see El Salvador in the condition it is in today.

Library of Congress

Q: Tell me what happened to the man who was president, Rivera.

WILLIAMS: Rivera stepped down from the presidency and another military officer was elected president after I had left the country. Rivera came to Washington as Ambassador and later died, I believe a natural death was not very old. Unfortunately some of his bright young men like Alvaro Magana and Rafael Glower Valdavieso... I really felt quite convinced that El Salvador would continue on that path. I suppose what I had overlooked was the growth of an opposition which would take any opportunity to obstruct reform in El Salvador and which spent a lot of time and money trying to persuade the American people that there was a growing threat of communism in El Salvador. That was the sort of thing that was easy to persuade Americans of because of the experience of Cuba. But as I look back on the origins of the present fighting, I have to say that I believe we put too much emphasis on the military side for solutions. We should have continued on working to eliminate social injustice. We had such a long record of cooperation with those who were considered responsible for social injustice that we were inevitably looked upon by reformers, students, intellectuals, etc. as a nation which was partly responsible for their troubles. We did have a CIA station in El Salvador. It was largely inactive. It was very small. We certainly did not encourage the dissents or the guerrillas. The only time that I can remember authorizing the CIA to take any action was in an election when the head of the CIA said he would like to give some help in propaganda techniques to one side. I, to my great regret, said I had no objection to his spending some money on propaganda, on papers, etc. I always regretted afterwards that I had done that, but I don't know if it had any effect. He certainly didn't engage in anything else.

Q: Why do you regret it?

WILLIAMS: I regret it because looking back on it now I think that was interfering too much in their affairs to let our CIA station provide them with papers and propaganda. I don't think it was on a very large scale. The time I was in El Salvador the armed forces were very small. I think that including the treasury police there were probably not more than 6,000,

Library of Congress

although it may have gotten up to 10,000, uniformed men in the armed forces. I know some people today, 1980s and 90s, have said that we are responsible for anti-subversive organizations in Central American countries, including El Salvador.

But my emphasis when I was there was certainly on reducing the military. In fact, I made a strong effort to reduce the size of our missions. I saw Secretary Rusk at one point, about 1962, and said that our military missions in El Salvador are too big. There are more people in our air mission than there were pilots or planes in the Salvador air force. Mr. Rusk, always busy with something, said I should write him a letter and he would see that something is done. I went back to the embassy and wrote a dispatch describing these military missions and how unnecessarily large they were. I made it as concise as possible and then sent an even more concise note to the Secretary saying that this was what he had asked me to do and that I hoped he would help me get the mission reduced. Nothing happened.

I had an occasion to go to Washington not long afterwards and I saw John Alexis Johnson, who was very high up in the Secretary's office, and I asked him about this. Could they do something about it? He said, 'Oh, no. I turned that over to Jeff Kitchen, he will take care of it.' I got a hold of Jeff and he said, "Murat you have annoyed the Pentagon by even suggesting such a thing. We can't do anything about it." I said, "Well, really it is absurd, you have got to do something about it." Well, in the end they arranged to have the Army Commander, Panama, General Andrew O'Meara, from SOUTHCOM (Southern Command) to come to El Salvador to talk about reducing the size of the missions. General O'Meara spent three days there. We talked about the size of the missions and finally he said to me, "I can eliminate two positions." I said, "Only two?" He said, "We have to have full missions." I said, "All right, you are going to eliminate two, when are they leaving?" He said, 'They will leave when they finish their tour of duty. One would be in a year and a half and the other in two years.' It made no sense to me to have such strong military missions in El Salvador. The one threat that might justify it would be a Russian threat, if there were a Russian threat. I don't think the Russians were very much interested in El Salvador.

Library of Congress

The wealthy people were constantly crying that the Russians were coming. They would come to the embassy and tell us that a new group of Russians were seen landing on the coast, or maybe they were Cubans. In any case they were communists and we had to help them. It takes a very gullible person to believe all that. I certainly wasn't gullible enough to believe the threat was serious.

Meanwhile there was among the students, as often there is in Latin American countries, a movement to bring about these social reforms. The students were impatient. They wanted the elimination of unjust practices, land reform, etc. as soon as possible. They were encouraged by two or three hard-line communists who had lived elsewhere and come back to El Salvador.

At one point a student demonstration was suppressed rather bloodedly by police. I can't remember what year this was. You had the roots of a rebellion at the university after blood was shed. Little by little this spread into the countryside. I am aghast when I think of the dimensions of revolt in El Salvador, which during the 1980s led us to give El Salvador billions of dollars in military aid. It exasperates me to hear about it. I always said when I had the chance that we shouldn't give them military aid. But here we were giving billions of dollars of military aid. Anyway after any possible Russian threat disappeared after the changes that had taken place in the Soviet Union, I continued to feel that had we pursued our purposes under the Alliance for Progress and concentrated on economic development and the elimination of social injustice, that the tragedy of El Salvador as it is known throughout the world today would not have happened.

There is one thing I would like to say a word about during my period in El Salvador and that is the great good fortune I had, and I mean this most sincerely, in having with me such outstanding people as Robert W. Herder, who was our AID chief most of the time. He had a deep understanding of what the problems were and how to go about it. He was there most of the time I was there as ambassador. Leonard Saccio had great political skill and

Library of Congress

wisdom in economic development as well as ordinary public affairs. He was my Deputy Chief of Mission during most of my time there.

Q: Saccio was not a commissioned Foreign Service officer. He had come from AID. What persuaded you to take him as a DCM rather than to insist on an FSO as your Deputy Chief of Mission?

WILLIAMS: I wanted him because I had had some experience with him in his AID functions and I thought AID was terribly important there. So, Leonard Saccio was an officer of considerable prestige to come to a small country like El Salvador as DCM. I was certainly rewarded in every respect by having him there.

Q: You have spoken of the caliber of your DCM and the AID director, what about the other parts of the diplomatic mission the political section, the economic section, USIS, etc.?

WILLIAMS: We had a few outstanding people. We also had some of the types that had been sent ahead and been so imbued with the spirit of cooperating with the wealthy families that they perhaps didn't see through the injustices.

Q: Did it show up in any way in their reporting or recommendations to you?

WILLIAMS: I think some of them were more afraid of the commies than I was more of a feeling that there was a communist problem. On the other hand, I had very sound economic officers like Philip Burnnett, who was already a PhD and a man of considerable experience before he came to the economic section. And David Reynolds, a very eager young economic officer who later wrote a book about El Salvador.

We were very fortunate to have the Robert Nathan mission with us in El Salvador much of the time. We were also fortunate to have Theodore Moscoso in Washington interested in what we were doing. He was head of the Alliance for Progress. He believed in the virtue of economic development intensely because he had seen what it meant to his own Puerto

Library of Congress

Rico. He believed that anything that could be done in Puerto Rico could be done in El Salvador.

We had many ingenious ideas. We had a competition once among Salvadoran architects for the best low cost housing that might be available. We encouraged the Salvadoran government to hold the competition. I did try very hard to avoid actual interference in their affairs. We might suggest things to a foreign government without telling them to do it. It was their decision as to whether they wanted to do it or not. We were very careful, also, to make sure that our advisors realize the different cultural background and all the other differences when they proposed solutions to problems to the Salvadorans.

Q: Speaking of support from Washington, what was your relations with the Assistant Secretary for Inter American Affairs, Ed Martin?

WILLIAMS: Excellent. Ed Martin understood what we were trying to do. He gave us full support. I think that he appreciated, more than some others, the fact that the American Ambassador had to be a representative to all the people, not just to the rich, wealthy oligarchy. He understood the fact that we might be doing things that the oligarchy might object to. I believe Bob Woodward is the same way. Bob Woodward had been Assistant Secretary.

Q: Did you have anything to do with the White House? Ralph Dungan?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Ralph Dungan encouraged us in what we were doing. Arthur Schlesinger, who was also at the White House, kept in close touch with what we did in El Salvador. He wrote me a letter, which unfortunately I have lost, saying that what we were doing in El Salvador was closer to what President Kennedy wanted in the Alliance for Progress than any other country. We did it without feeling that we had to have the approval of the oligarchy before we encouraged any program. It didn't matter. You were trying to help the

Library of Congress

people as a whole. Of course the oligarchy, who spent a large part of their time out of the country in Paris, Rome, Miami, didn't like their position being threatened.

Q: They had close ties to the military, I take it.

WILLIAMS: That has become truer and truer as the years pass, I think. The oligarchy depended upon the military to keep order. After the great blood shed, La Matanza, the blood shedder, of 1932, the peasants of the country were sort of cowed for a long time. Then they began to realize what injustice they were suffering. That was when they began to protest being hungry. It is so obvious that El Salvador could be a successful and prosperous country because the laboring classes are among the hardest working in the world. Their land was fertile. I remember once Mr. Henry Wallace, former Secretary of Agriculture, paid us a very brief visit and told me that he had seen lands in El Salvador grow four crops in a years. They could diversify too. They sometimes undertook to growing flowers and fruit and vegetables for the American markets.

Q: Do you feel that the military advisory assistance group's relationships to the military was a positive or negative force?

WILLIAMS: I don't think they were negative. I just think there were too many of them. I'm sure they had some good influences, but I think we over did it. We shouldn't have relied on them so much to maintain tranquility. We should have counted on eliminating sources of unrest and injustice. We didn't emphasis too much land reform in my time because I found from reading about it in other countries, that unless there is a judicial system to back up a man's title to his property, unless there is education so a man can know what to do with his property, unless there is capital available for buying seeds and technical know-how, land reform usually doesn't work. There have been land reforms in El Salvador in the past, but they usually end with the originally people owning it all again because if the poor peasant can't read or write he doesn't know what a title is and can't protect himself.

Library of Congress

The military in recent years have changed their relations to the big landowners somewhat. Instead of protecting the landowners they are beginning to get a bit of their own. The military got more and more land of their own.

Q: They actually got land of their own?

WILLIAMS: Yes. The military began to get land of their own and their own peasants to look after them.

El Salvador represents such a tragedy to me because I can remember Senator Fulbright when he was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, saying, "We have been doing such a good job in El Salvador that we ought to make it an example for other countries as to what can be done."

Q: What do you attribute to why things went wrong down there vis-a-vis the US policy towards that area?

WILLIAMS: US policy was too much influenced by the wealthy families. The wealthy families scared too many US policymakers into believing that there was a real danger of communism there. Two, I think US policymakers took the short term view of believing in oppression rather than in positive economic development, the elimination of social injustice.

Q: Was this congruent with the demise of President Kennedy and the ascendancy of President Johnson and new policies and personnel in the structure in Washington?

WILLIAMS: I feel that very strongly. I think that Kennedy with the support of people like Ralph Dungan and Arthur Schlesinger devoted themselves to a policy that would eliminate injustices. The successors to Kennedy believed more in using a strong arm, US or local, to maintain order. I just think that couldn't work. It would make us a sort of colonial power trying to govern the little republics of Central America.

Library of Congress

I know that President Johnson's Assistant Secretary of State, Tom Mann, told me in 1963, before Kennedy died, that I as ambassador in El Salvador was making a big mistake. I was not working with the wealthy families. "After all," he said, "they have the power." As I look back and think what the policy became and what it meant to be working with the wealthy families, I realized that it was a sure recipe or formula for trouble in that part of the world. If we are going to support local oligarchies in each country Honduras, in Guatemala, in El Salvador and Nicaragua we are just making trouble because those oligarchies don't have the support of their own people and we would find ourselves with the wealthy people on our side but the masses of people against us. And that is not a position for the United States of America to take.

Mr. Johnson's policy of using a strong arm resulted in building up the military missions, which I had been opposed to, and ultimately as the years passed it meant more and more American advisors taking part. From the standpoint of the people of those countries, certainly those people in El Salvador, they look upon us as their enemy.

[If I may say parenthetically this is not unlike a problem we have in the Middle East today. We have the emirs and kings on our side and bought a few other heads of government, but the people are not with us because what we have done is help keep the kings and emirs in office and ignored the people. I shouldn't make too much of a parallel there but parenthetically it is interesting.]

Q: Before we leave El Salvador, Mr. Ambassador, what about the United States Information Service? What role did they play and how effective were they?

WILLIAMS: We had a USIA library which was a good thing. We had a very active USIA officer named Robert Delaney who ran a good standard program. I don't think that we made a great effort to influence the local newspapers, although we provided them with material from time to time.

Library of Congress

Q: Did they teach English?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Q That was probably popular.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it was popular. I might add one other thing. We had in El Salvador one of the first Peace Corps that went abroad. When the idea of a Peace Corps was first mentioned, we were asked for our comments. I replied enthusiastically that I would like to see a Peace Corps group sent to El Salvador. I noted that I had been in Israel when Israel had something like a Peace Corps, groups of young technicians who they sent abroad to Iran, Ghana and other neighboring countries to help them in their economic and agricultural development. So, a very good Peace Corps came to El Salvador something like 25 men and women in the first group. They lived in the country and the life of the simple people of the country. Generally speaking, I think they were widely accepted. They did many nice thing improving water supplies, sanitary, improving agriculture, the breeding of cattle, etc.

Q: These were all positive things?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Occasionally someone would suggest that the Peace Corps were an agency of CIA and I would say that it was ridiculous we did not get our information from the Peace Corps. We were glad to see individuals from the Peace Corps. My wife and I sometimes stayed with them, sleeping in hammocks, etc.

Q: When you were in El Salvador did scholars come from the United States, not financed by the US government necessarily, to study?

WILLIAMS: Not many.

Q: Not that much interest in Central America. Too bad.

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: I don't like this thing that goes on now that is call low intensity combat. Have you heard or seen that expression?

Q: No, I haven't.

WILLIAMS: It seems that our military supports low intensity combat. I don't quite understand why, but they describe fighting in El Salvador as LIC.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, earlier you talked about Sears, Roebuck and other American companies being a great force in Central America at one time. What happened to that operation?

WILLIAMS: Thank you for bringing that up again. I talked to the vice president of Sears, Roebuck who had been in charge of Central America in those days just a few months ago. He said that it had been one of the great periods of his life, but that it had pretty well petered out. First there was the war between Honduras and El Salvador which blocked the roads and interfered with trade. Then the old problem of Nicaragua discouraged it. The common market still exists, but the enthusiasm has gone out of it, which is very, very sad. I think the Central American Bank is still operating.

Q: Even as we speak, the President of the United States, and we are talking in February, 1991, has announced that there be tri-lateral trade talks with Mexico, United States and Canada, looking towards a free trade zone all the way down to the tip of South America. Perhaps Central American trade might grow within that framework

WILLIAMS: Absolutely. I am disappointed that the President didn't mention Central America is left for the future. But it is so logical to have free trade between those countries. Japanese investors, among others, were building clients in El Salvador. Lots of American companies came and left. It seemed always so darn logical to develop a program of social improvement and social reform and an economic program to pay for it. It was so easy for the wealthy families to convince some gullible American politician and

Library of Congress

gullible American diplomat that if we didn't keep them, the wealthy families, in their favored position so that they could control the country, the Russians would take over.

Q: I think the catch word has always been "stability" at all costs.

WILLIAMS: Yes, stability and security. I remember when in the early days in Central America that the worse thing that could happen to somebody would be to have a revolution in his country when he wasn't there. The next worse thing was to have a revolution. The first time I was in town during a coup d'etat was back in 1948. All it took was the young officers in the barracks to come out and overtake the President's bodyguard and take over.

Q: Was there any sort of civilian, civil service in El Salvador? Were there career public administration people?

WILLIAMS: I don't believe so.

Q: Your only career government people were the military.

WILLIAMS: Yes. I can't remember ever hearing about any kind of civil service.

Q: You were in El Salvador until what year?

WILLIAMS: Until July of 1964.

Q: What was your next assignment?

WILLIAMS: I actually resigned and retired from the service then, but someone persuaded me that I might stay on at least another year.

Q: Why did you resign, Mr. Ambassador?

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: I actually resigned for several reasons. One, I thought that what I had been doing could go on well enough in El Salvador. And I always wanted to do something in Virginia. I had not left Virginia until I was 21 years old. We had an opportunity to take over a farm and we ran it for almost 25 years. It was a good place for the children to grow up. I wanted to run for congress, which I did twice both unsuccessfully.

Q: When you left El Salvador hadn't you been talked to by the Department as to an onward assignment to another Latin American country?

WILLIAMS: No. When President Kennedy died, President Johnson asked to see all the ambassadors who at that time were in the Department. I was at that time on temporary duty on the promotion board so I went in with six or seven other ambassadors and when we were presented to President Johnson, Mr. Rusk introduced me as Ambassador Williams who is going to the Dominican Republic. That was a great surprise to me, I had heard nothing about it. Several of my friends asked why I hadn't told them about it, etc. I went aside as soon as I could and spoke to Ed Little, who was the assistant to the Secretary, and asked him what was happening. He said, "Your name went up to the White House yesterday." Then I got a call from Tyler Thompson saying he wanted me to do in Santo Domingo what I had been doing in El Salvador. Moscoso called me up to say about the same thing. One of them said, I think Tyler, "You heard about it first from the horse's mouth. You got it from the most authoritative source, the Secretary, himself."

Well, I was probably a little unnerved or something and when it didn't go through I thought I would go back and do what I had thought of doing ten years later on the farm in Virginia. I did.

Q: Do you know why it didn't go through?

WILLIAMS: I was told that the same assistant secretary, Tom Mann, who had told me it was on track had later told the President that I was too liberal to be sent to the Dominican

Library of Congress

Republic. Whatever he meant by liberal I can only judge by his attitude towards my work in El Salvador. It was not in line with what the old oligarchy wanted. This was rather disappointing to me because Tom had been a friend of mine. I had known him for a long time. When I saw him in the Metropolitan at breakfast one day almost a month after Mr. Rusk said I was going to the Dominican Republic, I said, "Tom, I am reading up on the Dominican Republic should I continue to do that?" He said, "Yes, it's on the tracks." And then I gather that he had other thoughts.

Q: Yes, he did.

WILLIAMS: It was kind of a shock because I had gotten things ready for the Dominican Republic, got someone to look after the children while we were packing. But, of course, I always knew you were not supposed to pack until you got your orders.

Q: But then you actually did come back to the Department as...

WILLIAMS: One of two deputy directors of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). I probably wasn't as useful as I might have been there because I had my eye already on the farm. I have often been accused of making big mistakes in my life, but more often they were little ones. That one may have been a big mistake. But nevertheless it is good to look back over all these things that have happened and I appreciate the opportunity to record some of them.

Q: I think your observations are very important and I am glad that we have recorded them.

WILLIAMS: I am glad you feel that way because it must have seemed dull to you sometimes.

Q: Oh, no. Not at all. I sincerely mean that. Not at all. In fact I sought out this interview because I knew about your background and I wanted to get it recorded and into the archives.

Library of Congress

WILLIAMS: Well, thank you. Actually after I had resigned I had a call from Joe Palmer who is Director of the Foreign Service, I think after Tyler Thompson, saying that there were several jobs that he wanted me to consider. Some of them I thought were pretty nice including eventually going back to Israel as ambassador.

Q: Oh, that would have been wonderful.

WILLIAMS: Also running the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: That would have been interesting too.

WILLIAMS: I probably would have been better off if I hadn't retired at the moment. Anyway, it has been good for the four children to live a country life before coming to what they are doing now.

Q: What would you say to a young person who is contemplating going into the Foreign Service? Would you generally recommend or not?

WILLIAMS: I must say that I would sometimes recommend against it and sometimes I have said to such a young person, "If you really want to have an effect on foreign affairs and have a big role in it, go out and get into an important New York law firm and when you get to the top come over." I am saying that cynically because I have seen that happen several times. There was a chap name John R. Stevenson whom I had known when he succeeded me as assistant naval attach# in Madrid. Jack had come back from Spain, had taken his examinations and been offered an appointment as a Foreign Service officer. His wife, said to him that she did not want to go abroad with the Foreign Service. So Jack went to law school, went into one of the biggest firms in New Yorl believe it was Mr. Dulles' firand within a fairly short time I had a letter from him saying he had been asked by Mr. Dulles to come down to be one of his special assistantwhat did I think about it? I can't

Library of Congress

remember what I said. He didn't come then, but later on he came to the Department as Legal Advisor when he was probably about 35 years old or something like that.

There are all kinds of ways and I never know exactly what to say to a young person. It depends on the individual, of course, a great deal. You have got to be willing to go to out-of-way places, isolated places. For example, my wife and I went to a very isolated post in Bucharest, behind the Iron Curtain. We were watched every minute of our lives. Sometimes you might be sent to an isolated consular post and you have to make the most of that. I generally advise a young man who wanted to have effect on foreign affairs to go into the Foreign Service. If he goes in and comes up all the way, he is bound to have a lot of influence.

Q: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

WILLIAMS: Thank you.

End of interview